Palladius of Galatia

(c. 363 – 420s)

BRIEFING

Palladius of Galatia (Greek: Παλλάδιος Γαλατίας) was a Christian chronicler and the bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia. He was a devoted disciple of Saint John Chrysostom. He is best remembered for his work, the *Lausiac History.* He was also the author of the *Dialogue on the Life of Chrysostom*.

Palladius is a saint in the Coptic Orthodox Church and in the Syrian Orthodox Church, wherein he is given the honorific title "The Solitary". His feast day is November 29.

LIFE

Early life

Palladius was born in Galatia in 363 or 364. He dedicated himself to the monastic life in 386 or soon thereafter, residing in the Mount of Olives.

Travels

Palladius travelled to Egypt to meet the prototypical Desert Fathers (Christian monks). In 388, he arrived in Alexandria. Around 390 he passed on to Nitria in Egypt, visiting the famous monk Or of Nitria. A year later, he travelled southwest to Kellia, an Egyptian Christian monastic community spread out over many square kilometers in the Nitrian Desert about 40 miles south of Alexandria.

Later life and ordination

After his travels, his health deteriorated and he went to Palestine in search of a cooler climate. In 400 he was ordained the bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia, and soon became involved in controversies which centred around St. John Chrysostom. In 405 he again travelled to Rome to testify that Chrysostom was not a heretic. Because of this, he was exiled by emperor Arcadius for six years in Syene, during which time he wrote his biography of St. John Chrysostom. In 412 or 413 he was restored to the episcopate, now being the bishop of Aspuna (Galatia).

His primary work was written in 419–420 and was called the *Lausiac History* (being composed for Lausus, chamberlain at the court of Theodosius II) which is also titled *The Lives of the Friends of God*. This history detailed Egyptian and Middle Eastern Christian monasticism.

Palladius died some time in the second decade of the fifth century AD in his jurisdiction of Aspuna.

LAUSIAC HISTORY

The ***Lausiac History*** (Koinē Greek: Ἡ Λαυσαϊκὴ Ἱστορία, romanized: *E Lavsaike Istoria*) is a seminal work archiving the Desert Fathers (early Christian monks who lived in the Egyptian desert) written in 419–420 AD by Palladius of Galatia, at the request of Lausus, chamberlain at the court of the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius II.

The text covers the lives of Desert Fathers and Mothers, and stories designed to instruct audiences on how to best avoid sin.

Originally written in Greek, the *Lausiac History* was so popular it was soon translated into Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Geʿez, Latin, Syriac and Sogdian.

History

The book was popular among monks all over the East, who appear to have added to it considerably in transcribing it. The first edition was a Latin version by Gentian Hervetus. A shorter Greek text was published by Johannes Meursius (Leyden, 1616), and a longer one by Fronton du Duc, and a still more complete one by J. Cotelerius. This longer version contains the text of Rufinus. Butler, Preuschen, and others think that the shorter text (of Meursius) is Palladius's authentic work, the longer version being interpolated. Amélineau holds that the longer text is all Palladius's work, and that the first thirty-seven chapters (about the monks of Lower Egypt) are mainly an account of what the author saw and heard, though even here he has also used documents. But he thinks the second part (about Upper Egypt) is merely a compilation from a Coptic or Greek document which Rufinus also used; so that Palladius's visit to Upper Egypt must be a literary fiction. But the shorter text itself exists in various forms.

A Syrian monk, Anan-Isho, living in the sixth-seventh centuries in Mesopotamia, translated the *Lausiac History* into Syriac with further interpolations. At one time the *Lausiac History* was considered a compilation of imaginary legends.[9] Roman Catholic scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century argued that it was also a serious source on Egyptian monasticism.

Liturgical usage

In the Eastern Orthodox Church (the Byzantine Rite) the Lausiac History is read at matins on the weekdays of Great Lent as two of the patristic readings, after the third kathisma and after the third ode of the canon.

An extract from the introduction

"In the fourth and fifth centuries of our era Egypt had come to be regarded with great reverence throughout Christendom as a Holy Land of piety.

"Pilgrims came from all parts to visit the saints who lived there, and several wrote descriptions of what they saw and heard, which are among the most interesting documents of the early Church. Palestine was so near that it was usually included in their tour; the glamour of its sacred sites, which remains with us still when that of Egypt has faded into oblivion, was already potent. But Palestine was clearly second to Egypt in the affections of the pilgrims.

"[As] expressed by Chrysostom ... Egypt ... was destined to be more fervent than any other, to have its towns and even its deserts peopled by armies of saints living the life of angels, and to boast the greatest, after the apostles, of all saints, the famous Antony.

"Palladius, ... made a pilgrimage to this holy land, like so many others, and stayed there many years. ... The character of the man stands out clearly in the History, He was sincere, simple-minded and not a little credulous. His deep religious fervour, of the ascetic type, needless to say, appears throughout the book."

PEOPLE

The *Lausiac History* contains descriptions and narratives of various monks, abbots and saints, including:

Isidore
Dorotheos
Potamiainê
Didymus
Alexandra
Amoun of Nitria
Ôr
Pambô
Ammônios
Benjamin
Apollonius
Paêsios and Isaiah
Macarius the Younger
Nathanael
Macarius the Egyptian
Macarius of Alexandria
Moses the Ethiopian
Paul
Eulogius
Paul the Simple
Count Verus
Pachôn
Stephen of Libya
Valens
Hêron
Ptolemy
Elijah
Dorotheus
Piamoun
Pachomius and disciples at Tabennesi
John of Lycopolis (Asyut)
Poseidon
Serapion Sindonios
Evagrius Ponticus
Piôr
Ephraim
Julian of Edessa
Adolios
Innocent
Philoromos
Melania the Elder
Chronius
Paphnoutius
Elpidius
Sisinnus
Gaddana
Elijah
Sabas
Abram
Silvania
Olympia
Candida
Gelasia
Ammas Tails
Taôr
Colluthus the Virgin
Colluthus the Martyr
Melania the Younger
Pammachius
Juliana
Hippolytus
Magna